



# Arizona Department of Public Safety

**- For Immediate Release -**

Thursday, September 25, 2008

## “Operation Checkmate” results in the arrests of 591 violent gang members throughout the state

An unprecedented, statewide law enforcement operation combining the efforts of multiple agencies in Arizona has resulted in the arrests of 591 violent gang members with active felony arrest warrants.

The effort, dubbed “Operation Checkmate”, was launched on December 10, 2007 by the DPS administered Gang and Immigration Intelligence Team Enforcement Mission (GIITEM) task force along with the Mesa Police Department and specialized units from the Phoenix Police Department.

Numerous other law enforcement agencies from across the state provided invaluable support during the operation targeting violent gang members who were negatively impacting the quality of life for the citizens of Arizona.

Most of the 591 suspects arrested during the operation were wanted on outstanding warrants for violations like auto theft, aggravated assault, criminal damage, possession of narcotics, sale of narcotics, misconduct involving weapons, trafficking in stolen property, sexual assault, probation and parole violations and failure to appear in court.

The operation was crafted by law enforcement after several Arizona police officers were assaulted by violent gang members with active arrest warrants in the second half of 2007. In response to these violent incidents, the multi-agency GIITEM task-force initiated a project to correlate information on suspects with outstanding warrants against documented gang members.

- One goal of the operation was simply to remove career criminals who are gang members from the streets of Arizona’s communities
- There were arrests reported from 10 of the 15 counties statewide
- All arrests were documented gang members with active arrest warrants
- As of September 25, 2008, the total number of arrests is 591 (numbers will be updated as this operation continues)
- The operation will be ongoing as new warrants are added to the system

### **Press Inquiries:**

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- The officers on the street during this detail are conducting proactive and targeted criminal investigations which deter criminal behavior by the wanted subject

“Those arrested during this operation are known criminals, and it makes sense to apprehend these individuals who mock the criminal justice system by absconding. It’s sort of like weeding your garden, getting rid of the bad so the good can grow, and we will continue to pull the weeds and make our communities safer,” said Roger Vanderpool, Director of the Arizona Department of Public Safety.

“This combined law enforcement effort to arrest criminal street gang members in Phoenix and throughout the state demonstrates the continued cooperation between our law enforcement professionals. The Phoenix Police Department has committed its gang enforcement investigators to partner with Governor Napolitano and the Department of Public Safety in this operation and future operations,” said Commander Joe Klima of the Phoenix Police Department’s Violent Crimes Bureau.

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